

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 22 MARCH 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Edward Wilson, David Evans, Lynne Jones, Marion Mills (Vice-Chairman), Nicola Pryer and Eileen Quick (Chairman)

Also in attendance: Mr Louden, Cllr N Airey and Cllr Ilyas.

Officers: Alan Abrahamson, Hillary Hall, Kevin McDaniel and David Cook.

ONE MINUTES SILENCE

Members observed a one minute silence in memory of those who had lost their lives in the terrorist attack in London.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr McWilliams, Mr Cook and Alison Alexander.

Cllr N Airey informed that the urgent item on Lowbrook School had been removed from this agenda and the Cabinet agenda after the Leader and the head teacher had met to discuss the best way forward for the school and borough.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Evans declared a personal interest in item Standard in Education as he was listed as one of the presenting Members to Cabinet. As this was not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest he stayed for consideration on the item but did not vote. .

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Panel considered the latest financial update report that was due to be presented to Cabinet.

The Panel were informed that there was an underspend of £0.6m, with all Directorates contributing. This would leave reserves at £6.4m, well above the budget target figure of £5.3m. The Adults, Children and Health directorate were predicting an underspend of £31,000 on a budget of £57.5m. The Corporate and Community Services directorate predicted an underspend of £64,000 against a budget of £4.3m, despite significant planning pressures. The Operations and Customer Services directorate predicted an underspend of £428,000 against a budget of £2.6m.

With regards to the directorates performance the Panel were informed that Adult Children and Health commissioning were reporting an over spend of 9.8%, Health and early help and safeguarding were reporting an overspend of 5.2% and that Human resources and management an over spend of 7.1%. These overspends were offset by reporting underspend in Schools education services (-1.4%) and Health and adult social care (-3.7%).

With regards to Children's Services the Panel were informed that the following three areas were reporting and overspend, commissioning (+6.2%), health, early help and safeguarding

(5.2%) and dedicated schools grant spend (+1.2%). This was offset by underspends in schools and education services (-1.4%) and dedicated schools grant income (-1.2%).

The Panel were informed that main non DSG budget issues were:

- Home to school transport +£318k
- Agency staff in MASH +468k
- Residential Placements +261k
- Legal support from Joint Team +£276k
- CYPD childcare placements - £340k
- Leaving Care costs - £178k

With regards to DSG budget issues the Panel were informed that the issues were:

- Passenger assistance – high needs +£300k
- SEN and Alternative Provision +£416k
- PVI entitlement - January headcount - £207k
- Placements of children with special educational needs in non-maintained and independent special schools +£495k

(Cllr Ilyas joined the meeting as an observer)

Cllr E Wilson asked that with regards to appendix C and the Forest Bridge Contingency why there was slippage and was informed that this related to a later agenda item. Cllr Wilson also asked about the Trevelyan School Roof Replacement and was informed that this was to make the roof watertight.

Resolved unanimously that: the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations related to children's services.

STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN ROYAL BOROUGH SCHOOLS - A REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

The Panel received a presentation on the Cabinet report that reviewed the standards and quality of education in the borough for the academic year 2015/16.

The Panel were informed that the report focused on the progress against the outcomes set by cabinet in March 2016, overall performance of all pupils in the academic year 2015-16, OfSTED judgements of schools in the borough, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, the volatility in the number of permanent exclusions and the quality of information about 16 and 17 year old destinations.

The Panel were also informed that with regards to the March 2016 outcomes there were the following results:

- Every school has a published Pupil Premium Plan – Met (October 2016)
- 78% of schools inspected in the year (7 of 9) rated Good or Outstanding – Unmet (85%)
- 19% of students go on to study at a 'top third Higher Education Institute' – Unmet (26%)

The report demonstrated that overall there was a high level of achievement by pupils, particularly at KS2. However, pupils in receipt of pupil premium did not do so well. KS4 attainment gap had improved. Unfortunately the gap had increased at KS2. It was noted that there had been a drop across the board as different benchmarks were being used.

The Panel noted that the borough outperformed the national average at all Key Stages and ranked in the top 20% of 150 authorities. KS2 had moved from 44th to 24th in the country.

There had been limited opportunities for Ofsted judgements as five schools had become Academies, which delayed inspections. Many were Good or Outstanding and therefore were not due for inspection for some time. Since last years report 8 schools had improved their judgements, 3 had stayed the same and 1 had declined. 86% of schools were ranked as Good or Outstanding at end of February 2017.

Members noted the content of chart 1, including the gap in attainment at early years that narrowed by the time it got to KS4. The cohort of pupil premium pupils at Early Years stage was small and all ten authorities with less than 400 pupils in this cohort performed poorly for this group. Appendices B and C detailed plans to improve outcomes.

Paragraph 2.21 demonstrated the increase in permanent exclusions in the borough with 9 per 10,000 pupils with the national average being 7. The council was working to ensure all pupils had the right opportunities and access to education and had a statutory duty to educate excluded pupils after 6 days from exclusion. As it was not expected to see the level of exclusion fall it was planned to undertake a review of the Fair Access process that included introducing an independent chairman.

With regards to 16 and 17 year old destinations the Panel were informed that 2% were NEET, 50% EET whilst 48% destination was not known which was higher than the national figure of 16%.

Cllr Jones mentioned that with schools spending 80% of their budget on staff and with reduced funding there was little room to make savings that did not result in reduced staffing levels and thus limited additional support for the disadvantaged. Cllr Jones asked how the LEA could help. The Panel were informed that for the current financial year there had been an increase in the DSG. Officers would be looking at best practice and having targeted support to get a tangible impact for disadvantaged pupils. The borough was also looking at affordable housing for key workers.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that the fair funding formula would have a negative impact on smaller schools. With regards to pupil premium funding levels have remained constant but the data showed we were performing poorly for this cohort. He recommended that the LEA should consider communicating to parents which schools had strengths and weaknesses so they could be pinpointed to the best school for their child's needs. The data on schools should be more accessible.

Cllr E Wilson asked if it was known what was preventing schools making a difference on disadvantaged pupils outcomes. The Panel were informed that we needed to learn more about the cohort and their differences it was also important that governors be trained to now how to ask difficult questions to schools.

The Chairman asked if schools showed what pupil premium was spent on and was informed that they did along with showing what the cohort was and what they were doing to improve outcomes.

Cllr Jones mentioned it would be interesting to see progress being made rather than just the outcomes. The Panel were informed that progress was a good measure and compared to other authorities we were not having an impact at an early stage.

Cllr E Wilson questioned why the such a difference between Churchmead and other secondary Windsor schools. The Panel were informed that Churchmead informed that they struggle to attract pupils even though they have made good progress over the last five years.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that he felt that every Member should be sent a copy of the graph showing the attainment gap.

Cllr Jones mentioned that it was important to try and target support for children before they entered education, she mentioned that we used to have children centres to provide help. The Panel were informed that the children centre offer may have changed but they still offered targeted support.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that schools used to collect destination data however when this was transferred to the LEA there had become a data gap. The Panel were informed that when this data gap became apparent resource were put back in place.

Resolved unanimously: that the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel felt it was important that all councillors understood the importance of their role as corporate parents and recommended that compulsory training for Members be introduced. They also recommended that Chart 2 – RBWM National rankings by school phase should be circulated to all councillors as it highlighted that disadvantaged pupils on average were achieving less well up to the age of 11 and that there should be increased focus on rectifying this.

FOREST BRIDGE SCHOOL

The Panel considered the Cabinet report detailing the Heads of Terms arrangements alongside the timetable for signing a lease with the EFA by 24 March 2017 for a location to site Forest Bridge School.

The Panel were informed that Forest Bridge School was a Special School for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The school opened temporarily in September 2015 in the old Oldfield school building while the Education Funding Agency (EFA) set about finding a permanent site for the school. The EFA had carried out a comprehensive search for land suitable to use as a site for the special school. The search was initially unsuccessful.

The Borough had been working with the EFA, who had identified a suitable parcel of land within Braywick Park. The EFA were seeking to agree Heads of Terms on this site. There were currently three tenants on the Braywick Park parcel of land sought by the EFA. Two tenant's leases have come to an end, and one tenant was in negotiation.

The Panel were informed that the council were talking to Braywick Nurseries to adjust their boundary to allow the school to access the site. The plan was also to share outdoor and sports facilities with the school.

In response to Member questions the Panel were informed that the school parking will be available for residents after school hours and that the merger would be managed by Parkwood Leisure as the site was next to the leisure centre.

Resolved unanimously: That the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN 2017-2018

The Panel considered the Cabinet report regarding the business plan for the delivery of children's services through Achieving for Children in 2017-2018, together with the improvement plan.

It was noted that the vision and business of the plan remained the same as previous versions and that role was the delivery of children's services.

There had been positive feedback on the business plan and improvement plan from Kickback and they were keen on using AFC to look at bonding with other Children in Care Councils.

Members noted that learnings from the LGA Peer Review in late 2016 had been incorporated into the Action Plan and Business Plan. There had been a lot of positive headlines from the review but there were still areas for improvement.

The Panel were informed that the improvement plan themes were:

- Delivery of an integrated early help offer and alignment with MASH.
- Missing/child sexual exploitation.
- Recruitment and retention of staff including caseloads, supervision and management development.
- Corporate parenting.
- Educational improvements for those eligible for free schools meals.
- Alternative provision offer for vulnerable children and young people.
- Quality assurance and performance management, including audit.

The Panel were informed that the borough would be joining Achieving for Children (AfC) on 1 August 2018, the delay was due to the democratic processes of Kingston and Richmond. A soft launch would start on 3 April 2017.

Cllr D Evans informed that paragraph 1.2 of the business plan would need updating now there was a new date for joining AFC, he also mentioned that in section 4.3 there was a gap in the level of agency workers and asked for an update. The Panel were informed that there were vacancies in every POD but the only team that had recently lost staff was in fostering.

Cllr E Wilson asked what was meant by a 'soft launch' and was informed that this including joint working with AFC and the filling of vacancies to ensure a smooth transition in August 2017. Cllr N Airey informed that there would be certain limitations until we had officially joined AFC but there was an opportunity for collaboration between parties.

Cllr Louden mentioned that at the last leadership board meeting it was mentioned that the company would be looking to expand. The Panel were informed that they wished to increase its size by one authority a year but there would be a maximum of five in total.

Resolved unanimously: that the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations.

A) LOWBROOK SCHOOL

Item removed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.35 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....